

Overview

Faculty and administrators are often tasked with educating the whole student upon their arrival at college, so it is important to understand ways to assess the whole student. Often student demographics and characteristics are examined one at a time such as by examining differences by racial/ethnic, gender, or other known influences on the student experience. Disaggregating data in this way, allows us to better understand how different students understand and participate in their environment. This poster provides an overview of four different examples to better examine small populations with attention to intersections of identity.

Background

There are many challenges that assessment professionals face when investigating student experience through the intersections of identity. The first challenge is likely focused on where to begin. Disaggregating data is already challenging, and it may be difficult to conceptualize what an intersectional analysis should even look like. One strategy that is expanding in student affairs, but comes with its own set of challenges, is the use of a fluid approach within identity categories (Torres et al., 2009). Another challenge involves identifying which aspects of the student identity, characteristics, or experiences should be used in the intersectional analysis (Bowleg, 2008).

Aspects of identity are particularly difficult to capture in quantitative ways, and the operationalization of the intersecting identity aspects can present its own challenge. Another difficulty results from potentially small populations. Disaggregating by one aspect of identity can result in low sample sizes, but the intersection of identities can further shrink these groups. Another challenge involves choosing the quantitative method to use in intersectional investigations. Intersectional methods are not common in educational settings and may be unknown to many assessment professionals.

Data

National Survey of Student Engagement

- Annual survey of first-year and senior undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities
- In 2019, 531 institutions participated resulting in nearly 300,000 respondents
- Inquires about student behaviors that have been linked to learning and development

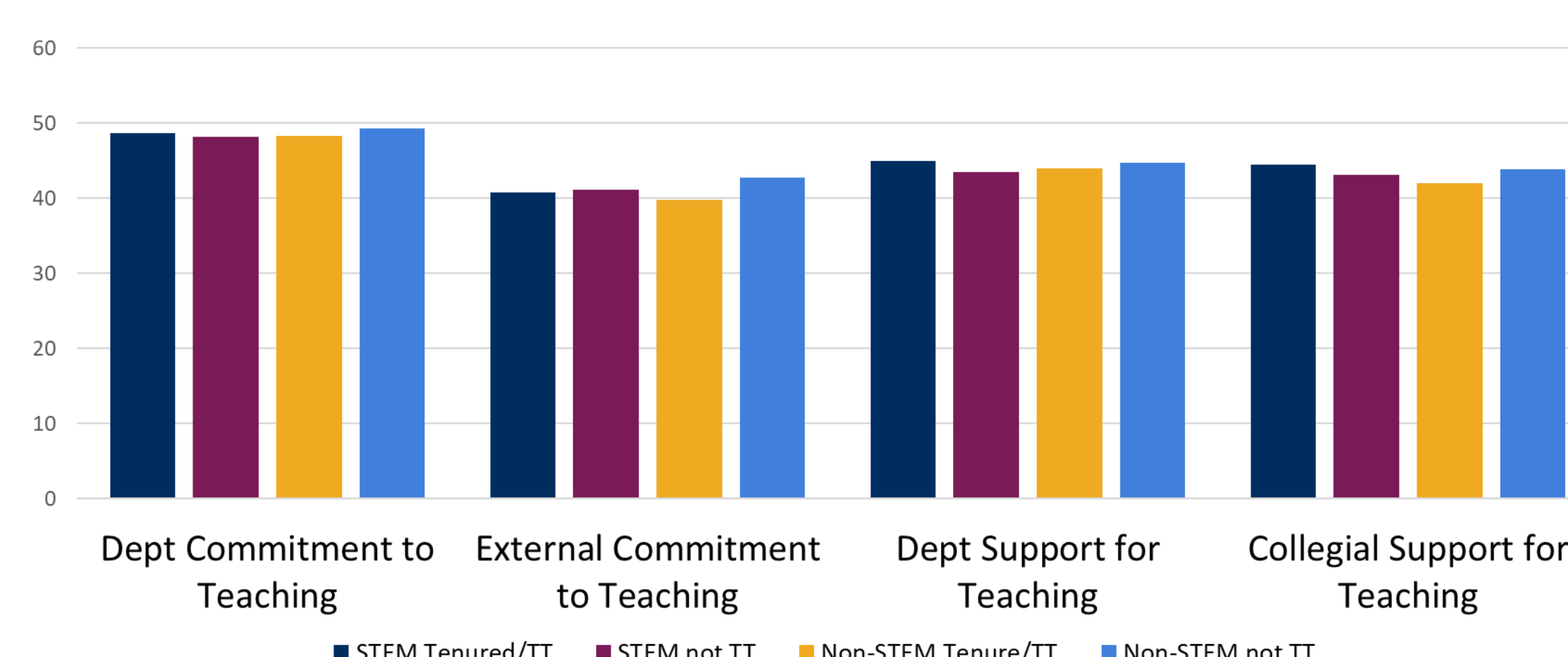
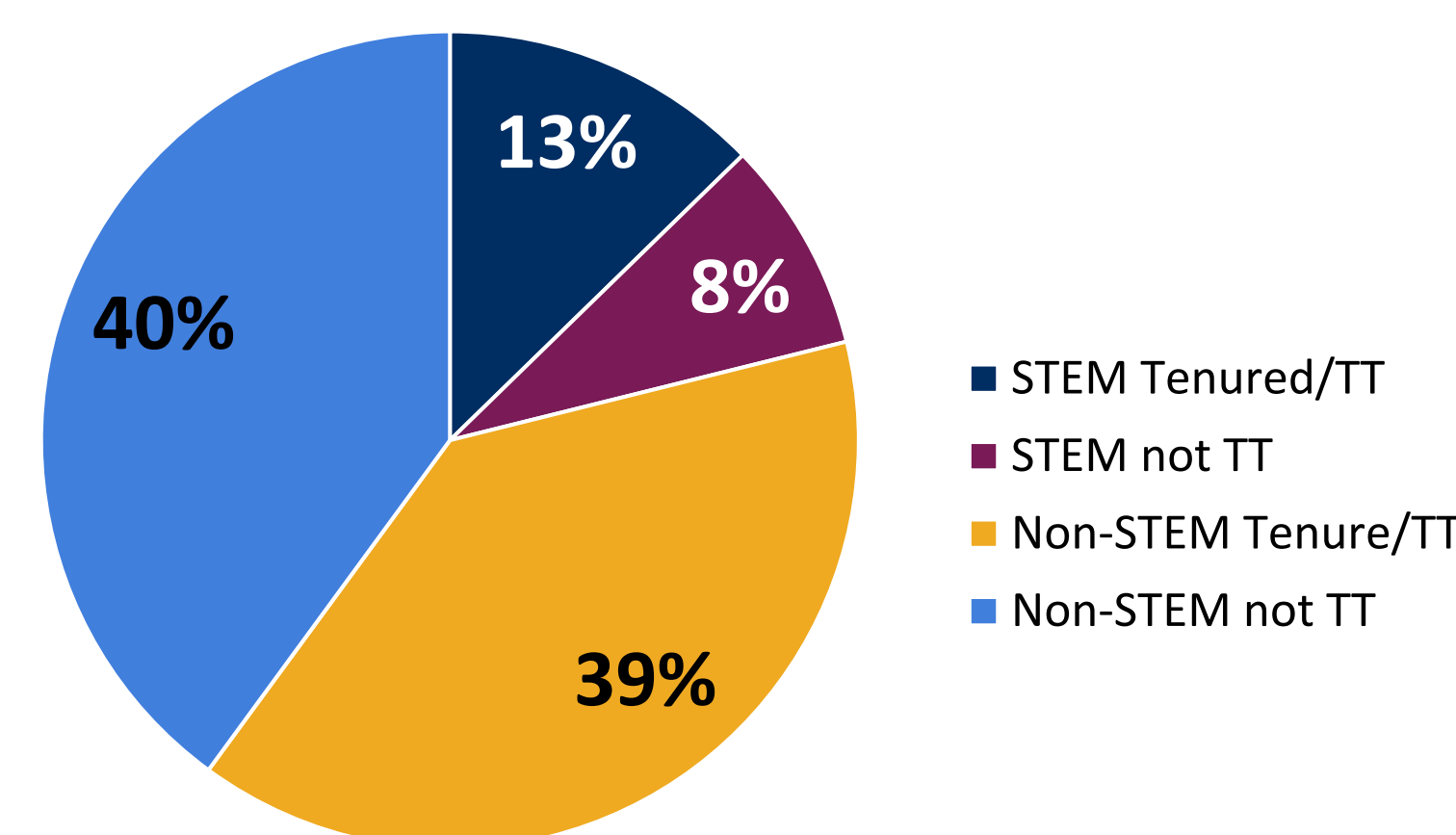
Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

- Annual survey of instructional staff that teach undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities
- In 2019, 120 institutions participated resulting in over 16,000 faculty
- Inquires about faculty behaviors that have been linked to increased student engagement

Example 1: Examining Dichotomies

- To investigate teaching environments by discipline and tenure status, first identify dichotomies:
- Discipline can be dichotomized into STEM and non-STEM
- Tenure status can be dichotomized by tenured/tenure-track (TT) and not TT faculty
- Create a variable out of the quadrants!

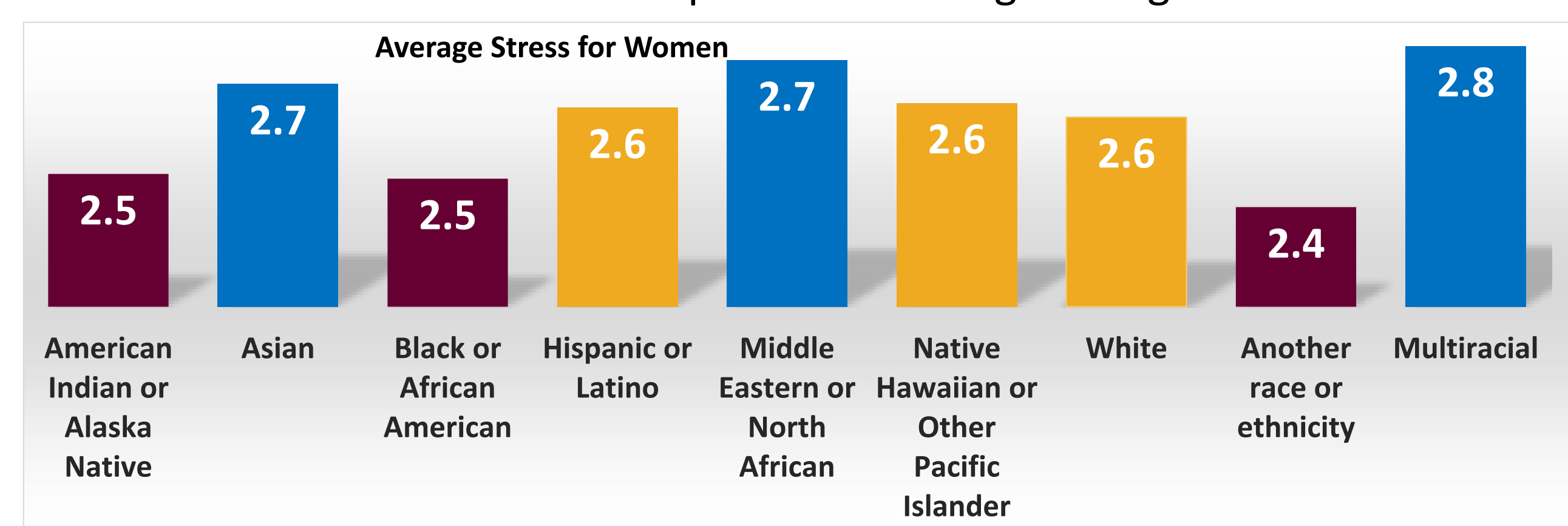
Quadrants of faculty for STEM and tenure status



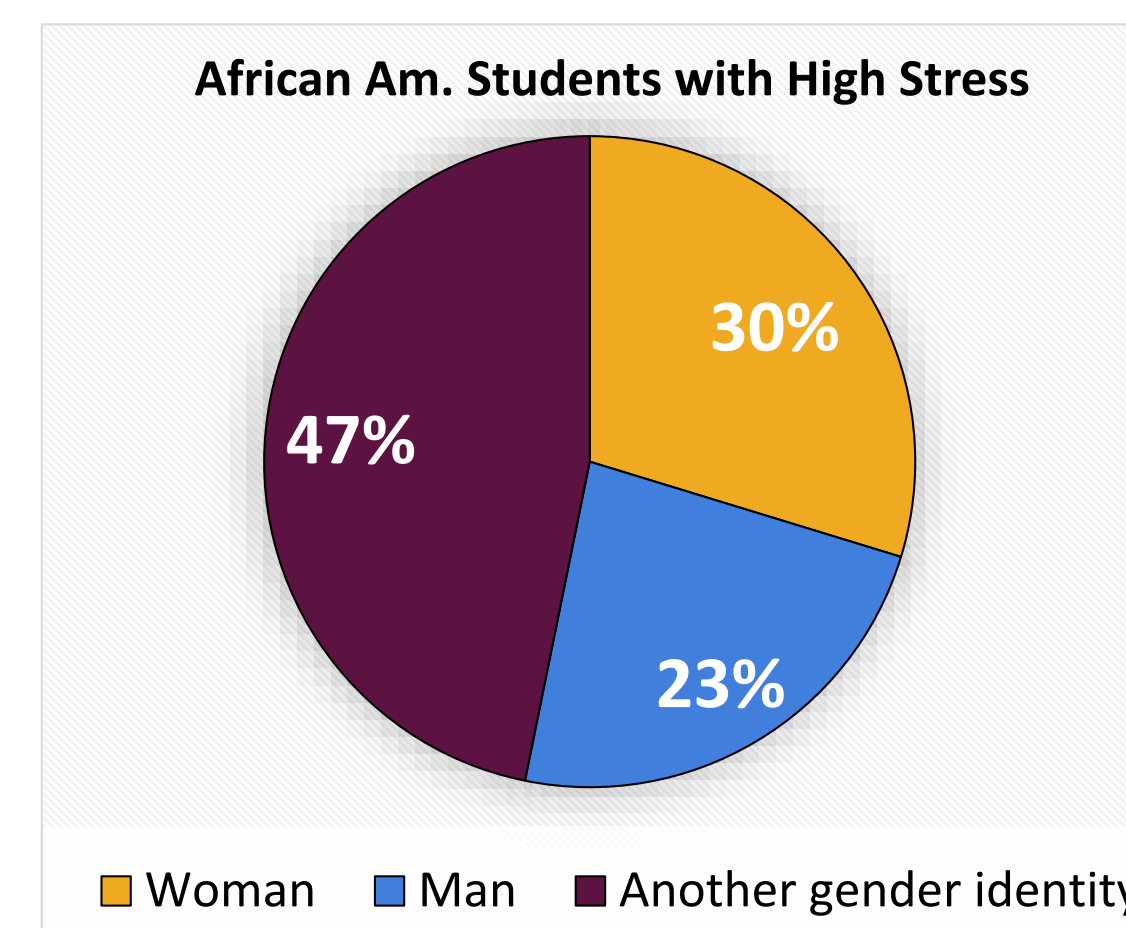
- This new variable of quadrants can be used in a variety of analyses: descriptives, ANOVAs, regressions, etc.

Example 2: Piece by Piece Approach

- Holding one variable constant allows you to investigate and look within the group to explore any interactions of identity with the constant variable.
- With this approach, you can examine each variable to see what may be driving the outcome thru interactions with the other variable.
- It is important to see if there is any significant difference by looking for variation within the group from different angles.
- What happens when you hold **Gender** as the constant? In the case below, we can see variation in stress levels within **Race** by holding **Gender** (woman) as the constant variable. You can repeat this holding other genders constant.

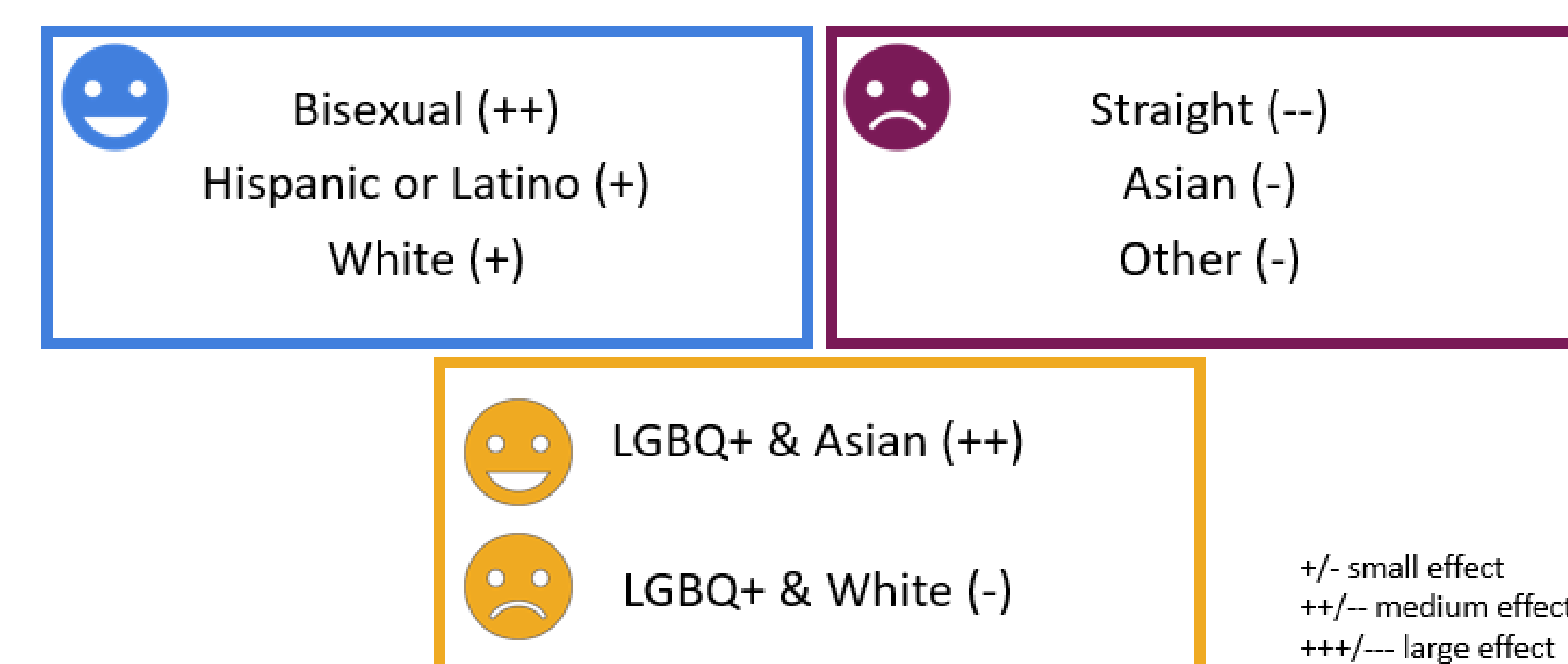


- When you hold **Race** as a constant and **Gender** as the driver, we see larger proportions of students with a nonbinary gender identity and women having higher levels of stress within the pool of African American students
- You could continue to hold some aspects of identity constant and add in layers of variation to see more such as African American women by sexual orientation



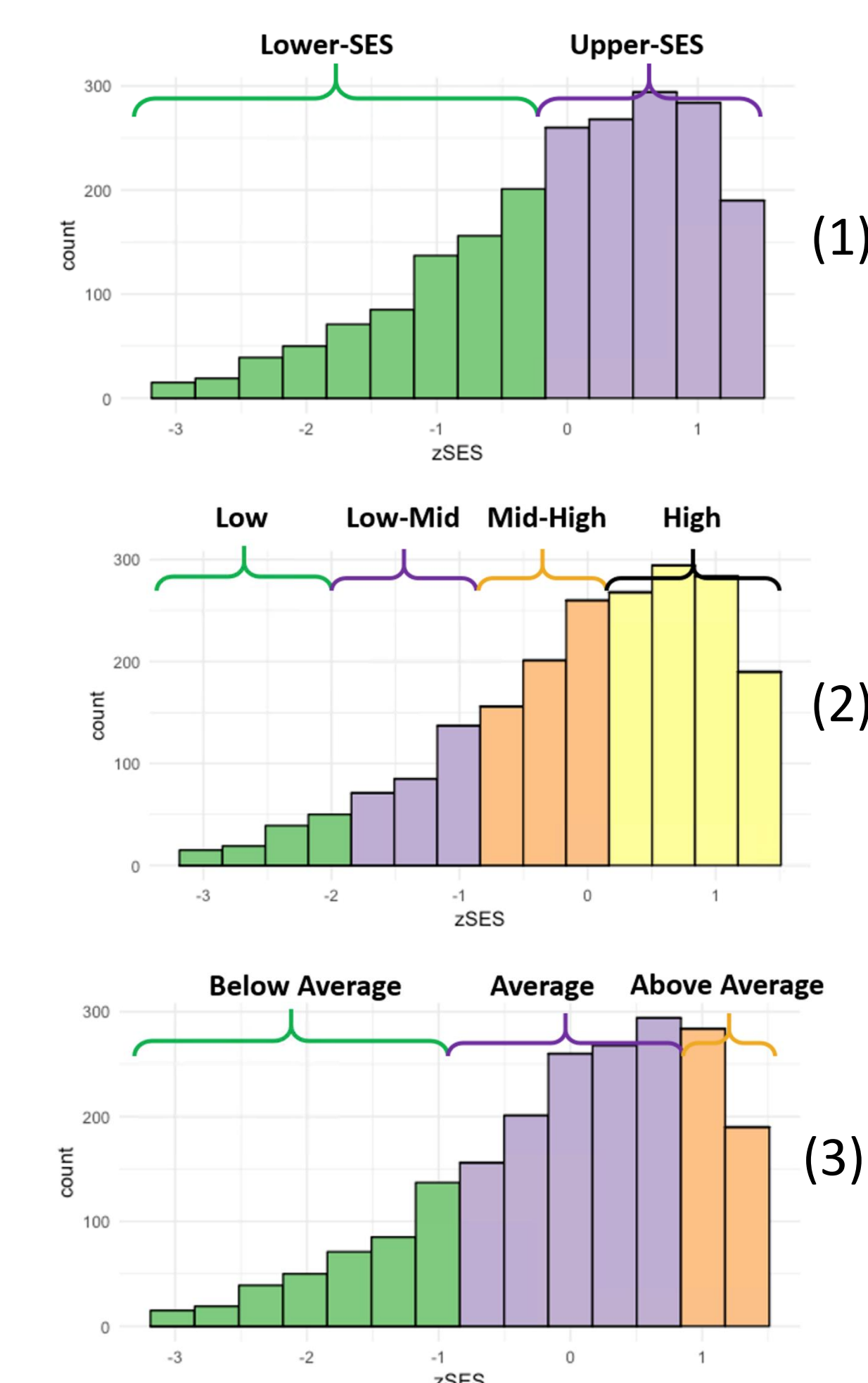
Example 3: Interaction Effects

- When two variables may be closely related (e.g., gender and race), and those variables are both believed to be affecting an outcome, you may want to consider interaction terms.
- Multiplying the two terms together before putting them into a model allow us to look more closely at intersectional components of identities.
- In the example below, without interaction terms it may appear that Asian students are reporting a lower (-) sense of belonging compared to peers, but when looking at students who are LGBTQ+ & Asian (++), they tended to report higher sense of belonging (BrckaLorenz et al., 2019).



Example 4: Grouping by Identity

- When grouping an identity, the best practice is to strive toward providing greater fluidity (Torres et al., 2009)
- Though write-in questions provide maximum flexibility for surveys, discrete and continuous data are more manageable and are still able to represent intersecting identities
- Cut points are an essential consideration when grouping a continuous-scale identity variable. There are several different approaches to cut points that may be considered. It is possible to group identities based on a: (1) median split, (2) evenly-distributed intervals, or (3) standard deviations. Each approach is shown on right, using SES as an example



References

- Bowleg, L. (2008). When Black + lesbian + woman ≠ Black lesbian woman: The methodological challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research. *Sex Roles*, 59(5-6), 312-325.
- BrckaLorenz, A., Duran, A., Fassett, K., & Palmer, D. (2019). The within-group differences in LGBTQ+ college students' belongingness, institutional commitment, and outness. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advanced online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000135>
- Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. A. (2009). Identity development theories in student affairs: Origins, current status, and new approaches. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50, 577-596.

Feel free to direct questions to Allison BrckaLorenz at abrckalo@indiana.edu. Find this poster and other resources at fsse.indiana.edu.